

# What is a Christian?

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[ 0 : 00 ] Of course, I have to say that many religions look after the poor, so it isn't a distinctively Christian thing, and there's much more to being a Christian than that.

You might think that being a Christian is a toxic brand, and certainly in politics it's a bit of a toxic brand, because the journalists are falling over themselves to try and get people to say something in consistency with being a Christian that makes them out to be homophobic and bigoted.

That's what they've been trying to do to Tom, what's his name? Tim Farron. So you might come along this morning thinking, a bit suspicious of these Christians, particularly evangelical ones, because there's something quite suspicious about them.

Is your definition of what is a Christian a religious person who goes to church occasionally? Would that do as a Christian? Interesting in the case of Hamid, who's trying to prove to the Home Office that he's a Christian.

What proof to the Home Office? What would prove that to the Home Office? The Home Office can't see inside people's hearts any more than you and I can. They asked Hamid if he knew what Lent was.

[ 1 : 16 ] Do you know what Lent is? Some of you do. Baptists don't do Lent. We're Baptists, you see, so Baptists don't do Lent, not particularly, anyway. Would knowing about Lent prove that you are a Christian?

No, I don't think so. And here's something that came up in conversation this week. I've got friends who are Christians and they look down on other people, apparently, because they reckon that they, the other people are sinners and the Christians aren't.

That's an interesting thought, isn't it? Christians, it is said, look down on other people. They accuse them of being sinners. Hence, trying to get Tim Farron to say that gay people are sinners.

That's what I was trying to get him to say that. To prove, as it were, that Christians are stuck up and superior and look down on other people because they're sinners.

All sorts of things need clearing up about what is a Christian. And maybe for you, now we've mentioned this matter of sin, you might be asking, would becoming a Christian help me?

[ 2 : 28 ] Because actually, I know I am a sinner. I don't like to say it in public. But I have feelings of guilt and moral failure. And is there a glimmer of hope for me if Christianity addresses this question?

So that's what's, there's some questions around this subject, what is a Christian? And my plan is to give you this answer this morning, that a sinner is, sorry, a Christian is a forgiven sinner.

A Christian is, that's one definition, a Christian is a forgiven sinner. There's lots of ways of expressing what a Christian is. But just that single thought this morning, a Christian is a sinner who has got the forgiveness of his or her sins.

And I'm going to look at it through this one incident that was read to us. It's an example in the Bible from the life of Jesus himself. It's in Luke chapter 7. And so if you opened your Bible and found that place, you could find it again, because we're just going to look at the story and make a couple of points from it.

It is, in fact, a very beautiful and fascinating story. And if we can go through it in sort of slow motion, I hope and pray and have prayed that we will be captivated and impressed by this story.

[ 3 : 52 ] It's beautiful and fascinating, not least for its impression of Jesus, but also for this character who we're never given a name, but we're going to find out a little bit about her.

And the portrayal of this person is quite striking. So that's what we're going to do. We'll look at the story and then make a few, just a few comments on it.

So it says in chapter 7, verse 36, this is about Jesus. Now, one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him or to eat with him.

So let's tell the story. A certain Pharisee, we find out later his name is Simon. There he is. He's going to invite Jesus.

Now, I should say that there are bits of the story that we only find out have happened when we get into the future. So there's bits of what you would call backstory that we only find out later.

[ 4 : 58 ] So you have to be prepared for that. But let's follow the sequence of it. One of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner. There he is. He's going to have a drink as well. He asks Jesus to eat with him.

So they're going to have a table. They have a low table and they put food on it. And they don't sit on chairs as we do. I think they either have a sort of a low couch that they sit on.

I couldn't draw that, so I've just got them lying on the floor. He asks Jesus to eat with him. Now, you should know, we should know what a Pharisee is.

A Pharisee in those days was an observant Jew. One who was definitely, consciously observant. He would make it a very strong point of his life that he observes all the laws of Moses. Well, all the laws and then all the things that were assumed to follow from those laws, additions, very, very scrupulously.

[ 6 : 04 ] So, very scrupulously. A little bit like if you're not a vegetarian, you have a vegetarian to lunch and the person says, I'm sorry, I can't eat those biscuits because if you look on the bottom of the packet, it says that there's 0.00% something in it which is not vegetarian.

And you would not have bothered. You wouldn't have read down the packet, but the person who's a vegetarian says, I can't eat that. And they are very definite about that and scrupulous about it.

And you might well consider it an awkward moment. This Pharisee would be very scrupulous. Can't touch that, can't eat that, can't do that, wrong time to do this, etc.

Highly disciplined. And he would say that being a Pharisee like this is what God has in mind for holiness. He would say he is being like God in his scrupulous, disciplined life according to the law of Moses.

So, you should understand what sort of person the Pharisee is. And he invites Jesus to have dinner. Well, that sounds to me like a kind and hospitable invitation.

[ 7 : 20 ] It's welcoming. Come and have dinner. Can't fault that, can you? He invited Jesus into his house. And we're told that Jesus accepted the invitation.

He went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. So, let's put Jesus reclining at the table. There we are. It's a happy-seeming occasion.

I have to say that in many of the stories of the Bible, when Jesus gets invited to lunch, very unexpected things happen. And on some occasions, the people who had invited Jesus really felt after a while they wish they hadn't.

Because he could be a very embarrassing dinner guest. Anyway, most of the time here, he is fairly inert. But there he is reclining at the table. And Luke says, which you don't get translated in English, behold.

So, that's between the full stop at the end of the word table and the three of 37. In our English Bible, we've just got a gap there.

[ 8 : 27 ] But in the original, Luke would have said, I do. Behold. Ha ha ha. Look. Look. Look, look, look, look, look, look, look. Ha! Look. And what?

Look what? Look. A woman. Now then. This is what we've got to look out for. This is the surprise here. Let's follow what it says.

Behold. So, I'll do it in a clunky way, in the same order that he tells it in the original. A certain woman who was in the city.

A certain woman. Hmm. We're not told her name. But she seems to be identifiable.

A certain woman who was in the city. A sinner, Luke says. A certain woman who was in the city.

[ 9 : 29 ] A sinner. So, he tells us that. It's not just the Pharisee's opinion that we're going to hear. Luke says. As the narrator.

That's what she was. A certain woman in the city. A sinner. Now, I translated it city. NIV says town. I don't know whether it's a big town or a small town. But I would like you to just imagine. In a big city like Brighton, there are places where certain women apply their profession.

There was actually down opposite St. Peter's. There was a brothel that started down there, actually. It's finished. It doesn't work from there now.

And many of us would just not have known that that was happening. If you were in a small town, you would probably know. Who's that lady there?

[10:34] Mummy, why is that lady wearing those sorts of clothes? She's a certain woman. Let's just. We'll go over here. Oh, look. There's St. Prince.

We're just heading towards St. Prince. A certain woman was in the city. A sinner. How did she get her clients?

Did she put advertisements? They used to be in the Argus. Don't think they're there now. I couldn't find it on the online version. Strange advertisements. Is this person selling a pram?

Is this person selling a coffee table? No, it seems to be completely different sort of services that are being sold here. I'd be quite surprised they allow that to be put in the paper.

But in a small town, you would know who it was. Whether they put their advertise in the paper or put a postcard in the telephone box is what used to happen in Brighton.

[11:32] A certain woman who was a sinner. Who was known. Notorious. It wasn't that people say, we haven't seen you before.

You know. Are you a student? This is a typical thing. Are you a student? Are you a nurse? They knew. A certain woman. Who was in the town.

A sinner. And it says, having known that Jesus reclined at table in the house of the Pharisee. She took, what does it say?

She brought an alabaster jar of perfume. And she set herself behind him. So let's just see how that, is that quite the same order as we've got it in English?

When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of ointment and she stood behind him. Well, it says as she stood behind him.

[12:37] Well, let's just take it as it says she stood behind him. Get the sequence of it. Jesus is just minding his own business, eating in this Pharisee's house. And a certain woman heard that he was there.

Having known that he reclined in the house of the Pharisee, what did she do? She took this alabaster jar of ointment. Very expensive, if it's anything like the jars of ointment in other parts of the Bible.

Well, she hears, she says, where's that ointment? This is my savings. There it is. And she takes herself off to the Pharisee's house.

How did she get in? Did they leave the kitchen door open? Did she know some of the members of staff? How did she do that? And it says she positioned herself. She set herself behind him.

Now, it says stand, doesn't it? She stood behind him. I suspect it doesn't quite mean to. It's just she positioned herself. If he was lying down, I think she would have had to have been nearer than standing.

[13:47] Can you imagine this? We just have a quiet meal together. Maybe there were more people, maybe there were less people. And in comes this woman. Who is she?

I'm humming a little bit. Can I be unhummed? So I'll switch this one off.

I had switched it. So I'll switch that one on. Is that okay?

Yeah? Okay. There we are having our meal. Somebody comes in. Who is this woman? And she's, which one's Jesus?

She stations herself behind Jesus. There she is. And what brings her here? You'd think the very last place that she would want to show her face would be in the house of a scrupulous pillar of the community, man of rectitude Pharisee.

[14:57] What's she doing here? What's she doing here? What's she doing here? Well, let's keep our eyes on her. And it says, having taken the alabaster jar of ointment.

So she got this ointment. And she stood behind him. And she stood behind him at his feet, weeping. And she was weeping.

And she was weeping. So here we are. Was the football interesting? Yes, the football was quite interesting. Oh, who's this woman? And she comes in.

And she's just weeping. And Jesus, whatever he's talking about, the football or something, that's funny, my feet are getting wet.

That's what it is. She wet his feet with her tears. And while all this is going on, I don't know, is Jesus still talking about the football or something like that?

[15:54] And this woman, streaming with tears, realizing that Jesus' feet are now wet, unravels her hair, which would be quite a thing to do in public.

She unravels her hair, and she wipes his feet with her hair. That's just unbelievable. Just unbelievable.

With the hair of her head, she was wiping his feet. And she's kissing his feet.

So I'll put some kisses. It's remarkable, isn't it? They're talking about football or whatever they're talking about. And behind Jesus, all this is taking place.

This woman has come in. Who's she? She's got this jar of ointment. What's she doing with that? She's weeping tears and tears so as to wet somebody's feet.

[16:59] And now she's unraveled her hair, and she's wiping feet, of all things, with her hair. And kissing his feet, we presume repeatedly.

And she takes this ointment and anoints his feet with this precious ointment. You know, if you saw that, you would never forget it.

It's a little bit like when years ago, we used to have a guy who would come in, and he would sit at the back, and every now and again, he would put on dark glasses and come to the front as if he was going to take over the meeting.

He was a little bit uncertain about that. Later on, he went up to CCK and caused 2,000 pounds worth of damage. So I think we got off very lightly.

But you think, I sort of remember that. And here at this dinner party, this woman has come in so bizarre, so deeply felt.

[18:02] Who would do such a thing as this woman is doing? Weeping. Wiping. Kissing.

And taking this precious ointment. Look at the cost of that. You know, it's even more expensive than printer ink. She's just putting that on his feet. What a scene.

What has driven her to do this? What is the emotion in her that leads her to pour out her heart in this way?

I mean, she knows about men. But she's treating this man in a very different way. What is it? Is there some sort of relief in her?

Is there some sort of, is it a gratitude thing? I'm so grateful. I'm so grateful. Is it a love thing? It's not like the love that she usually sells.

[19:09] This is, her heart is, I mean, it's difficult to describe without using cliches, isn't it? But her heart is overwhelmed.

Her heart is overflowing. Her heart, something has just struck her life so deeply that this seems to be the only reaction she's capable of.

She hears he's there. I must go there. She takes that ointment. I must take that ointment. I must get in there. I'll stand behind him. I won't disturb him. And it all comes out, and there we are.

And Jesus doesn't seem to be too fazed by this, does he? We're not told that he responds, at least not at this point. But the Pharisee does.

So he's sitting over here, and he's seeing what's going on behind Jesus. And it's interesting, his response, because his response is this.

[20:08] Having seen, when the Pharisee who had invited saw this, having seen, he said inside himself, so the narrator tells us this, although it's not spoken out loud, but presumably somehow the narrator knows that the Pharisee, the Pharisee, remind it, the Pharisee, the one inviting him, I don't know why I put an I there, but he said in himself, this is what he's saying, if this man were a prophet, he would be knowing who and what this woman is, who touches him, that she's a sinner.

This is an interesting sequence of thought, isn't it? This Jesus, if he were really a prophet, if he was really to do with God, if he really had any sort of spiritual sensitivity, he'd know that woman behind him, who she is.

And interestingly, it loses a sort of what word, what she is. You get a feeling for that? She's a sort of a lower class thing than a person.

Who she is, but what she is. That woman who's touching him. Where have those hands been before? You know? That sort of thing he's thinking.

Because she's a sinner. We know. Although we're not supposed to look in the Argus, we've seen it. Although we weren't supposed to look in the telephone boxes, we've seen it. We know who she is.

[ 21 : 51 ] He sees. Well, you see, does he see? It's interesting what he sees, isn't it? I see a sinful woman, up to no good.

And I see Jesus, who if he had anything about him, would shoo her away. Does he really see? Does he see what's going on? He says to himself, if she was a prophet, he'd know who and what, that she's a sinner.

And Jesus would be repulsed if he were really holy. Jesus would be disgusted. Jesus would shoo her away. It's interesting that Jesus doesn't, does he?

Jesus doesn't. Jesus doesn't. That's a shocking thing in itself, isn't it? And what's the Pharisee thinking?

Well, he's thinking sin is ugly. Well, I think we'd agree with that. Sin is ugly. It might come under the brand name of freedom and self-expression and doing my own thing or I did it my way like Frank Sinatra sang all those years ago.

[ 22 : 56 ] That's what the brand name says on it, but underneath it's sin. And it's ugly. And the Pharisee says, yeah, it is ugly. We agree with him on that. And he's thinking sin's your own fault, woman.

Sin's your own fault. You're to blame. Pointing the finger. And I think he's also thinking, and redemption's your task.

Don't you come in here. You sort yourself out first. I think that's what the Pharisee's saying. And he's also saying, I think the implication is, and don't you think I'm the tiniest bit like you wear chalk and cheese, you sinner.

Now, what is he saying? He's saying, I'm not a sinner. I think that's what he must be saying, isn't it? I don't, I can't relate to you at all. I don't have sin. Sin is a completely different world to the one I'm in.

This Pharisee is saying. Or perhaps he's saying, I do have sin, but I've redeemed myself by my own efforts, by my self-discipline, by the choices I've made, and I have, I'm on the right path.

[ 24 : 04 ] Thank you, God, but I'm on the right path to you. Is that the sort of thing he's thinking? Now, it's interesting, Jesus' reaction.

So now he calls the Pharisee by his name, and he says, it's a rather lovely bit of conversation. So there's this woman weeping behind him and all this ointment going on and everything, and the guy's just thinking this in his heart, and Jesus can see this, and he says, Simon, I have something to tell you.

And the Pharisee says, tell me, teacher. I've got something to tell you. Oh, I wonder what that would be. Yeah, carry on.

Yes. Tell me what it is you're going to tell me. And then Jesus tells this lovely little story. Well, so it's a lovely little story. It's about debt. Two men owed money to a certain money lender.

One owed him 500 denarii, and the other 50. I struggled a little bit about putting that into ordinary money, but let's suppose 50K and 500 pounds, something like that, a 10 times difference.

[ 25 : 19 ] Neither of them had money to pay back. So the money lender cancelled the debts of both.

In English, it uses several words, cancelled the debts of. The Greek word seems to just be one word, and it says grace.

Favor. Show them favor. Favor. The word grace there is sort of lurking around underneath. Grace means when you do something for somebody which they don't deserve.

When you do something for somebody, because they've got no reason why you should do it, you just do it. Gratuitously. Graciously. And in this story, Jesus says, the money lender just wrote off the debt.

He graced both of those. He said, okay, forget it. Done. Forget it. How many? What did you say, 50? Forget it. Now, if you owed a significant amount of money that you couldn't pay, whether it's a large amount or a small amount, and the person said to you, you'd be anxious about it, wouldn't you?

[ 26 : 33 ] You'd be burdened by that. You'd come along to the prayer time if you were a church person, and you would say, please, can you help me? Let's pray that God would look after this because that's really getting on top of me.

I haven't got any money. I can't pay it. And the money lender says, oh, forget it. You'd be so pleased, wouldn't you? Guess what happened today?

You know that money I owed? I don't owe it anymore. Brilliant. Load off my shoulders. Sky is blue. Oh, the sun is shining. Yeah? And Jesus says, now, here's a thought. Here's my question to you, Simon. Which of those two men would love the debt canceller more? Which would love him more, do you think? Which one's going to be jumping for joy and which one's going to be walking out of there saying, well, that's not too bad, but one of them's going to be going, wow, fantastic.

[ 27 : 39 ] Which one's which? Which do you think? And in raising this question, of course, Jesus is making a comparison, isn't he? He's saying, this woman's situation, she's a sinner.

Do you remember? I don't know whether we ever discussed that, that she was a sinner. I don't know whether you knew that. Yeah, you did. Sin is like, it's comparable to a debt. It needs repaying. And it's comparable to a debt which you can't pay. And it can apparently be cancelled by the one to whom the debt is owed. That is a conceivable possibility that the debt could just be cancelled, that sin could just be written off, that God could say, done, sorted out, just forget it.

That could happen. Now, Jesus doesn't say how it could happen, but the story doesn't work unless that is a possibility. And he's saying also that when a debt is cancelled, like when sin is forgiven, it produces a response.

You might say, oh, that's rather nice. Or he might go, oh, fantastic! It does something inside you and you respond to it. If that wasn't true, then the story wouldn't work.

[ 29 : 06 ] So he says, okay, of these two guys, which do you think is going to love the money lender most?

Who loves more? And Simon, it's a funny, interesting way he replies. He says, well, I'll go with, I'll go with the one that was forgiven more.

I just like the way he said, I'll go with that. The one, and there's that word of graced. So in English, it says the bigger debt cancelled, but in the original, it would say something like, he graced him more. And Jesus says, good, you won the prize. Correct. You have judged correctly. That's interesting. Interesting little story.

And now, Jesus follows up the conversation. See, the woman's still there, isn't she? Notice, he turns to the woman, verse 44, and he says to Simon, so I'm not quite sure how he does that.

[ 30 : 17 ] He turns to the woman and says, Simon, that's interesting. That's, the woman is the subject of our conversation, but I'm actually talking to you. Meaning, meaning Simon.

Do you see this woman? An interesting question. Presumably the answer is yes. Do you see this woman? I came into your house.

And then there's a succession of phrases that are exactly parable, where he says, waterfall my feet, you did not. But we thought he was being quite polite, inviting Jesus to his house, didn't we, at the beginning?

He was quite polite to invite him, but apparently, his politeness went so far and no further. So, Jesus says, well, I came to your house, but water for my feet, you didn't.

But she, you didn't. But she, with tears, wet my feet, and with her hair, wiped.

[ 31 : 20 ] It's an interesting comparison, isn't it? I came into your house, you didn't offer water for my feet, you probably thought, Jesus isn't quite up to that.

It's very nice to have him, but I only do that for friends and family, or for really important people, like the mayor, or something like that. So, Jesus, just sit down, and we'll forget about feet washing and stuff for today.

But she, but she, with tears, has washed my feet and wiped them with her hair. Kiss, you gave me not.

Nice to see you, Jesus. Over here, if you wouldn't mind, there we are. Nice to see you. Nice to see you too. Yes, please come down and join us.

So, kiss, you gave me not, but this, but she, has not stopped kissing my feet. Interesting comparison, isn't it?

[ 32 : 27 ] My head, you did not anoint. Oh, we don't usually anoint people's heads unless it's a very special occasion. My head, you did not anoint.

But she, anointed my feet with this huge amount of very expensive ointment actually. See the point of comparison at each point.

She has poured perfume on my feet. So, there's something really going on with her, isn't there? Which isn't going on with you, Simon, to be quite honest. And the word grace gets smuggled in

there as well.

But he says, for this, it's for this reason. I think it's the therefore word. But I'm going to say something to you. All the things you didn't do but she did, and I'm saying to you, forgiven her sins. Many. Her many sins are forgiven. What accounts for this emotion inside her?

[ 33 : 42 ] Her many sins. Forgiven. Washed away. She knows it. She can see it. She's got it.

That's what's been going on. Her sins. Forgiven her sins many. For she loved. Use the same word. We've got much and many. Her sins many. Her sins much. Loved much. That's why she's doing this, you see. Because she loves me much.

And she loves me much. Because she's been forgiven much. And to be honest, if you're little forgiven, you love little. Says something, doesn't it?

Who was it who didn't greet me particularly at the door? Oh, it's Jesus. Very nice to see you. Won't make a big fuss about him. Little love because Simon little forgiven.

[ 34 : 48 ] Now, and she's, and Jesus says to her, and we'll pick up, there's a sort of interleaving conversation there, your sins are forgiven. Forgiven are your sins.

Interesting that Jesus realizes that she's already experienced this. That's why she's loving so much. She's found this burden has just rolled away from her.

And now he confirms it with a word, your sins are forgiven. But interestingly, while he's saying that, I'm sorry I keep on saying interestingly, I just find it a fascinating, fascinating situation, fascinating story.

While he's saying that, the other guests, you know, Rabbi so-and-so and the mayor and Professor so-and-so and a chap from the bank, and they're saying to one another, what's going on here then? Who is this who forgives sins? Who forgives sins? Uh-oh. It's rather vulgar, isn't it, to forgive sins?

[ 35 : 57 ] Who dares to forgive sins? Rather distasteful, is that chap from Nazareth?

Just, he just said, that woman's, you know her, don't you? That woman's sins are forgiven. That's what he just said. Who could say that? Well, here's news, Jesus can say it.

That's great, isn't it? Jesus can say to somebody, your sins are forgiven. What a great thing to have, somebody to say that with conviction, authority, certainty, the power to do it, to say, with a word, your sins are forgiven.

Don't I have to be scrupulous and keep, you know, and build up a good CV and then maybe, possibly my sins, Jesus says, no, it's done. Your sins are forgiven. He can't do that.

He jolly well can, and he just did. And he says to the woman, verse 50, your faith has saved you. Go in peace.

[ 37 : 04 ] What wonderful words to say. It could take more unpacking than we've got time for this morning. But he relates it to her faith because she's believed something about Jesus.

She's seen something about Jesus which is, what shall I say, is more than just surface. It's to do with what she trusts his capacity is, what she trusts his intention is, what she trusts he is able to do, what sort of person he is.

She's seen, she's trusted it, and that has just made this huge difference in her life. And he says to her, go in peace. Go into peace.

I think those words stretch forward from that day to the rest of her life. What's my life going to be like? Will I just go back? Will I go back to putting small ads in the local paper?

No, you won't. Because you are going into peace now. It's a peace that comes from the words of Jesus. Things are different.

[ 38 : 14 ] Previously, you were in turmoil and dysfunction and guilt and complication and I know things can be complicated.

but the fundamental truth of it is this. You are now going, the next step you take and all the other steps will be steps of peace. Great, isn't it? It's an assurance.

It is true. What you felt inside you is true objectively. It's confirmed. So I'm not, Jesus says, I'm not going to backtrack on this. You are forgiven. It's by faith.

And he uses this word salvation, doesn't it? Your faith has saved you. And this is the future pathway for her of peace with God. And the criticism, of course, from the other guys, religion shouldn't be like that.

It's rather vulgar to forgive sins. I mean, but Jesus says, oh, that's the way I do it. Forgiveness, grace, that's been all the way through this.

[ 39 : 19 ] That's all this is about, forgiveness and grace. And it's really all to do with Jesus. You see, the Pharisee would say, well, religion is to do with keeping rules and being scrupulous and realizing you look on the bottom of the packet to see what's really in there.

That's what religion is all about. And for the woman, if you'd said, what is it all about? She'd say, it's all about Jesus. That's why I'm wiping his feet. That's why I've got up behind him here too.

Because it's him. So, let me just draw to a conclusion. Which character do you most identify with? Which sort of religion is yours? It's a reasonable question. Would you say, I mean, nobody's going to say yes to this, are they? But I mean, I'm still going to ask the question.

Would you say that, truth be told, that you're more like the Pharisee? I've met any number of people in this building who said to me, well, I don't need forgiveness because I'm not a sinner.

[ 40 : 25 ] They don't have to be any particular sort of person to say that. All sorts of people have stood in this building, I've had a conversation with them, and they say, well, it's all very well for you, but I don't need forgiveness.

I've never sinned. What they mean is I've never committed murder, I've never stolen a large amount of money, and I've never committed adultery.

That's what they mean. But let's just be honest, there's sin. That is a very superficial idea of what sin is, isn't it? Just look inside yourself.

Well, you've probably never committed murder, you've probably never committed adultery, and probably not stolen a large amount of money, but you've been cruel. You've said nasty things about people. You haven't trusted God.

The list could go on and on and on. The Pharisee says, I live a good life. Well, that's me. I don't receive much forgiveness because I don't need much forgiveness.

[ 41 : 26 ] And therefore, that word should say polite, as regarding Jesus is polite, but fairly indifferent. You can gauge it by your response to Jesus.

You yourself might be thinking, well, Jesus is very, I respect him. I'd invite him to dinner, definitely respect him. But it would not be true of you to say, I just love him because I've got no option.

And I have to say that you're on the side of the Pharisee if that's your response to Jesus. Think of the woman. Conscious that she was indeed a sinner. So, she's a sinner and she's not saying, don't you call me a sinner.

I'll punch you in the mouth if you call me a sinner. She's saying, I am. That's true. And she finds full and complete forgiveness in Jesus with a faith that having grasped who Jesus is and what he can do.

A faith that is bold to enter through the kitchen door and go right into the Pharisee's house. That's pretty bold, isn't it? And her faith is also extravagant that she goes to her savings cupboard and pulls out her jar of ointments and says, that's all going to go on Jesus' feet or whatever part of his anatomy I'm close to.

[ 42 : 46 ] That's going to go to Jesus. It's extravagant. Has Christianity produced that in you? Has it produced a faith which leads you to do things that you wouldn't otherwise have done?

And has it produced in you an extravagance that leads you to, well, to do things that you wouldn't otherwise have done, to plan things you wouldn't otherwise have planned, to embark on things you wouldn't otherwise never have embarked on?

Well, that's what it was for the woman because she loved Jesus much and she loved much because she'd been forgiven much and she received his promise for her present and future life.

So, what is a Christian? My answer today is a Christian is a forgiven sinner and you can be that and you might have come to church thinking, oh, there's all these things in my past which I hardly dare think about but they just, there's a whole string of them and I've done them all and I'm not going to invite it in public but I have and I was wrong and it's down to me and I feel awful about it and I am a sinner and you can be a forgiven sinner because Jesus has the power to say your sins which are many are forgiven.

Full stop, yes. Knows that they're a sinner, knows that it's their fault, knows that forgiveness comes as grace and that comes not because I've worked it up but somebody gives it to me from outside undeserved and are so grateful to receive that from Jesus.

[ 44 : 37 ] You know, Christians can forget that. Christians can be so busy with all sorts of things that they forget. That's what it is at heart. I am so grateful to Jesus for the forgiveness he's given me.

Be a Christian. Have Jesus give you forgiveness of sins and then when you've received it love him much.

Ask him. Trust him. Receive what he says to you. Let's sing a song together. Thank you.